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The Truth on Barbie

CREDIBLE evidence is mounting that the United States dirtied its hands in protecting Nazi war criminal Klaus Altmann-Barbie and assisting his escape to Latin America from France.

Thus the other day the U.S. Justice Department expressed "deep concern" and announced that it would conduct a thorough investigation of the allegations.

Not a moment too soon. The decision is a welcome departure from the Justice Department's previous head-in-sand posture. Some Justice officials reportedly had said that the assertions were only a rehashing of "ancient history."

Though almost four decades have passed since World War II, memories of Mr. Barbie's inhumanity live in the minds of Holocaust survivors and his victims' descendants. His deeds are a permanent blot on the pages of history. The U.S. role in his evasion of justice must be made clear.

Last month, Mr. Barbie — known as the "Butcher of Lyon" — was expelled from Bolivia and returned to France to

stand trial for crimes against humanity. Already he has been convicted *in absentia* by French courts and sentenced to death for 4,342 killings, the deportation of 7,591 Jews to concentration camps, and the arrest of 14,311 people when Mr. Barbie was a German SS commander.

Allegations that U.S. intelligence and military services shielded Mr. Barbie from French authorities and made possible his escape to South America come from two sources, a former U.S. Army counterintelligence officer and a French lawyer. Both provide chillingly detailed and verifiable data.

The evidence paints a vivid picture of the United States using Mr. Barbie as a source for intelligence about Soviet activities and objectives in Europe and Germany. It also suggests a U.S. role in Mr. Barbie's escape from Europe.

What did the United States do to help this man escape after the war, and why? The American people deserve answers, and it's good that the Justice Department belatedly has decided to seek them.